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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [PGOV](#) [KWMN](#) [IZ](#) [KU](#)

SUBJECT: AL-SABAH INSIDER SAYS U.S. DOESN'T VALUE KUWAIT;
SHARES CONCERNS ON IRAQ, TERRORISM, AND WOMEN'S RIGHTS

Classified By: Ambassador Richard LeBaron for reason 1.4 (b) and (d)

[11.](#) (S/NF) Summary: In early fall 2004, PolOff met several times with a senior Shaykh from the Al-Sabah ruling family who works in the Prime Minister's office and has daily interaction with Prime Minister Shaykh Sabah Al-Ahmad. The interlocutor, who is in his forties and has a prominent lineage, conveyed a repeated theme in these candid "off-the-record" discussions that Kuwait does not feel its friendship toward the U.S. is adequately reciprocated. He noted that the growing threat in Iraq is from Iranians, believes civil war there is inevitable, and urged the U.S. to be more aggressive against insurgents in Iraq. He intimated that the GOK is pursuing release of the Kuwaiti Guantanamo detainees only for public consumption and recommended the U.S. raise officially the issue of controversial Kuwaiti Islamist youth camps because it is too sensitive for the GOK to deal with directly. He discussed the ruling family's perspective on Kuwait succession and mentioned that Prime Minister Shaykh Sabah intends to visit the U.S. after the Presidential election to congratulate the winner. End Summary.

Feeling Left Out

[12.](#) (S) Over several candid discussions with a ruling family member on the staff of the Prime Minister, PolOff heard frank views that, while clearly meant to influence USG thinking, also likely reflect opinions of the Prime Minister and other GOK decisionmakers. An oft-repeated theme is that it appears to the Prime Minister that the U.S. doesn't appreciate Kuwait. The interlocutor urged the U.S. not to forget about Kuwait's efforts and sacrifices to build stability in Iraq. He emphasized that Kuwait was an excellent partner to the U.S. and that the U.S. did not appear to be sufficiently grateful. He said that the Prime Minister considers the MNNA status, recently conferred on Kuwait, to mean very little because the U.S. already gave the same status to certain other countries which have not done nearly as much as Kuwait. He further opined that he hopes the U.S. does not view Kuwait the same way it does some other MNNA countries, implying that several of the MNNA countries were not highly regarded by the U.S. as allies.

[13.](#) (C) The Shaykh also expressed to PolOff his frustration that so many U.S. Government visitors come through Kuwait, enroute to Iraq, and do not meet with Kuwaitis. He further complained that when U.S. officials do request meetings, they are often last minute requests, where U.S. officials arrive during the Kuwaiti weekend (Thurs/Fri) and ask for meetings on Friday afternoon. This, according to the interlocutor, convinces him that Kuwait is not appreciated. He reiterated that Washington must understand it has a great friend in Kuwait but that it must be careful not to lose its friends.

Iraq: Civil War Looms and Elections Will Fail

[14.](#) (C) He opined that Iraq would enter a period of civil war and that there was no way to stop the escalating sectarian violence. Calling himself an "optimist" he said "let them have their civil war and hopefully in five years or so things will settle down." He did not think that a civil war would spread across the borders into Kuwait.

[15.](#) (C) On the Shia threat in Iraq, he believes that the U.S. should have removed or killed Moqtada Al-Sadr quickly and not let him gain the following that he did. He opined that the Iraqi people would respect the U.S. more if greater force were used against these types of threats. He repeatedly told PolOff that the Iranians are crossing the border into Iraq in great numbers to cause trouble and to affect the upcoming elections. He further remarked that the U.S. should delay the Iraqi elections until there is stability. He is convinced that the elections, should they take place in January, will be a failure. Characterizing the elections as the USG's "one chance," he argued that once this effort at democracy fails, the U.S. will lose its credibility as a promoter of democracy in the region. (Note: These remarks came well before the recent elections in Afghanistan. End

Note.)

Islamist Youth Camps: Junior Jihadis Not Arts and Crafts

16. (S/NF) The Shaykh explained that Islamists sponsor spring camps in the desert and summer indoor clubs as a prime source of recruiting youths for various Islamist causes. (Comment: Islamists advertise in the spring and summer for young Kuwaitis to go to "summer camps." These camps are believed to serve as, at the very least, a source of superficial indoctrination into an intolerant religious worldview and at worst, a fertile recruiting ground for violent jihadis. A September 11, 2004 Washington Post article noted that Khalid Sheik Mohammed confessed that "he was drawn to violent jihad after joining the Brotherhood in Kuwait at age 16 and attending its desert youth camps." End Comment.) The Shaykh said that the GOK, which regulates almost every educational forum, does not regulate the camps or even monitor them. He said this issue is too sensitive for the GOK to address for fear of being accused by Islamists of regulating the teaching of the Qur'an. He advised PolOff to take the issue up with the MOI and recommended that the U.S. "rock the boat" on the issue because it is a serious one that the GOK is politically unable to address.

17. (C) Further on the Islamists, he mentioned that Abdallah Al-Mutawa and Hamad Al-Ali play a big role in the organization of the summer camps and that Hamad, despite being the "former" Secretary General of the Scientific Salafis (aka Salafi Movement) is still something of a thinker for the organization. (Note: Abdallah Al-Ali Al-Mutawa is known to have provided large donations to charities in Pakistan, Afghanistan and Russia during the past two decades. A close relative of Mutawa's recently confided to Poloff that he estimates these donations totaled over \$90 million during this period. End Note.)

Ruling Family Succession

18. (C) Speaking as a member of the Al-Sabah family, he informed PolOff that the widely held expectation of how succession of the Amir and Crown Prince may play out is not set in stone. While Prime Minister Shaykh Sabah is considered by all to be the second in line behind Crown Prince Saad to become Amir, PolOff was informed that if something should happen to the Prime Minister, it is assumed that Shaykh Nawaf Al-Ahmed Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, the first deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister would become Amir. (Note: The very ill Crown Prince Saad is not considered a viable candidate for the position of the Amir. End Note.) Behind Nawaf is Shaykh Mishaal Al-Ahmed Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, the current Deputy Chairman of Kuwait's National Guard. He spoke as though this order of precedence was a well-established public fact. (Comment: Traditionally, of the top two Kuwaitis, one is from the Jaber Branch and the other is from the Salem branch. Given the current domination of most Ministries by the Jaber branch, it might not be surprising to see such a move. Both top spots were occupied by the Salem branch when Amir Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah and Crown Prince Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah ruled together from 1963-1965. End Comment.) The Shaykh, however, dispelled this "balance-of-the-branches" theory as a coincidence and appeared to truly believe that it is not a factor in succession.

19. (C) The Shaykh relayed that Crown Prince Shaykh Saad Al-Sabah was in increasingly poor health. He told PolOff that he met with the Crown Prince in August and that Saad did not even acknowledge him when the Shaykh tried to speak to him. He said that Saad had some form of colon disease in 2001 and this led to severe hemorrhaging resulting in massive blood loss. He informed PolOff that this blood loss led to brain damage. He reminded PolOff that the Amir continues to struggle with Parkinson's disease but that PM Shaykh Sabah, despite having a pacemaker, is in relatively good health.

If Women Vote... It Will Be for the Islamists

10. (C) Although he personally supports women's political rights, the Shaykh commented that it would be bad for Kuwait. He believes that should women be permitted to vote in general elections, the Islamists would benefit the most, thus putting even more Islamists into Parliament and pushing the society further towards religious conservatism. (Note: It is widely assumed, even among some proponents of women's suffrage, that the wives--in some cases multiple wives--of Islamists would be ordered by their husbands to cast their vote for the candidate he chooses, therefore increasing Islamist voter participation and the likelihood of Islamist candidates being elected. Post agrees that this is a possible short-term consideration should Kuwaiti women gain the right to vote. End Note.) He is convinced the measure will fail should it come to a vote in the National Assembly.

He commented that he knows few Kuwaiti women who actually want the right to vote or want to run in general elections for a seat in Parliament. (Note: Post, on the other hand, has several female activist contacts, who have openly declared their intention to run for office. End Note.)

Release of Gitmo Detainees Not a Serious Concern

11. (S/NF) The Shaykh told PolOff "off the record," that the Prime Minister doesn't really want any of the Guantanamo detainees back. Despite the public calls for a return of the detainees, he opined that this was being done only to appease the media. He also informed PolOff that the Prime Minister is planning a trip to the U.S. in January to congratulate the winner of the U.S. presidential election. In the near term, the Prime Minister is planning to travel to Europe, including Paris and London. He mentioned that the Prime Minister has no intention of traveling to Baghdad anytime soon.

Comment

12. (C) The Shaykh is well-educated, Westernized, and pragmatic. Because of his position and daily interaction with the PM, he does have a measure of influence with PM Shaykh Sabah and insight into the PM's views. Throughout the conversations, it was unclear where the PM's opinion ended and this Shaykh's began. That said, what was made clear is the perception of a growing frustration from senior GOK officials with the way the U.S. appears to be treating Kuwait. Although Kuwait remains supportive of U.S. efforts in the region, the Shaykh relayed his opinion that the U.S. is not working with the Kuwaitis but at times appears to be dictating Washington's demands with an expectation of compliance. Of all his messages this was the most often repeated.

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LeBaron